1488

THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE U. S. A.

Christian Missions as a Factor in the World's Progress.

REV. JAMES S. DENNIS, D.D., SYRIA.

THE purpose of missions is to make Christianity effective in the world; to give it scope as a religious force among men. Beauty must be recognized to be appreciated. Material force must be operative if it is to produce results. Spiritual agencies must move men if they are to change character and shape action. Religious truth must mold and impel the life if it is to be a moral power in the world. Christianity is little—practically nothing—to the world if it is not a dominant and aggressive influence in human lives. The question whether missions are a factor in the world's progress involves, therefore, the larger inquiry whether Christianity—all pervasive and regnant—would be a

universal blessing to men. We cannot stop to discuss this question. Christian Missions draw their inspiration largely from the profound conviction that Christianity—simple, pure, loving, unselfish and sincere—is just what the world needs, and act accordingly. The one purpose they have in view is to exalt Christ before all men, and breathe his spirit into all hearts, and make Christianity a controlling influence in all circles of society. If the Christian religion is true, then missions should be sustained, not only because Christ urges his followers to prosecute them, but because there is in them a ministry of blessing and hope to the world.

Have missions as yet any grip on the world? Are they accomplishing a regenerating and uplifting work among the nations? Can they fairly be considered a factor in the world's progress? Does our century as yet yield any evidence that a new and mysterious civilizing force is at work more widely than ever before in our generation? Can we detect any signs of that spiritual mastery, that ethical control and world-wide dominion which we hope and believe will be given to Christianity largely through the toils and sacrifices of missions? We think that these

questions and others like them can be answered truly in the affirmative.

REFLEX INFLUENCE.

As regards the reflex influence of missions—both home and foreign—on the religious life of our own country, we think they may be fairly considered as a saving blessing to the churches of Christendom. What would our home Christianity be without them? It would be but a travesty of the Master's example—a refinement of selfishness; it would be love sitting with folded hands, charity caressing itself; it would be religion herself helping us to ignore the more generous and tender instincts of the human heart; it would betray our better natures into hypocrisy in that sweeter and higher realm of ministry where the soul should be doubly and forever sincere. Christianity without missions would be like Christ without a heart. If, therefore, there is to be any progress to Christianity in our home churches as an inspiration and rule of life, it must be along the lines of missions. It would be a suggestive and fruitful study to search out the influence of missions as a factor in the progress of our home Christianity and as an inspira-

tion to the finer and sweeter sympathies of human brotherhood among civilized nations. Should the whole idea of missions collapse and disappear *in toto* from literature, society and church-life, a darker shadow than we suspect would rest upon the world.

TRANSFORMING AND UPLIFTING POWER.

In the practical arena of missions, however, in the foreign fields is the most convincing evidence of their power as a factor in the world's progress. They are an educational agency of magnificent power and almost unlimited promise. Colleges, medical and theological seminaries, high schools and village schools are planted by them in all lands where they have entered. They are fountains of pure, helpful and instructive Christian literature in every prominent language of the East. What a mental training, an intellectual stimulus and a lifting up of moral standards is brought about by the periodical and permanent literature so widely published and distributed by our missionary agencies! It has come to be recognized as one of the functions of missionary organizations, in cases where the moral interests of their native constituencies are

involved, to call the attention of civilized communities to great questions of public justice and national ethics, such as the opium trade, the slave trade, the kidnapping of natives for forced labor, and the rum traffic, now so notorious in Africa. Some of the most cruel and degrading customs have disappeared largely through the agency of missions. In India we have conspicuous illustrations of this; and if the iron rule of caste is ever to be broken, to missions will belong to a notable extent the immortal honor of striking the fatal blow. They have been instrumental in introducing moral and material improvements into civil, social and industrial life, and in elevating standards of personal conduct and manners. They have stimulated productive industry, and quickened trade with other lands. They have indirectly introduced modern inventions and have encouraged the adoption of the facilities of Western civilization. They have rendered notable contributions to the scientific progress of the world in the departments of archæology, ethnology, philology, geography, mineralogy, geology, zoölogy, botany, folk-lore and comparative religion. They have developed and reduced to writing many important lan-

guages and dialects, and made them the medium of an instructive literature, and especially of the circulation of the Bible.

They are accomplishing much in the development and growth of the English language as a world-wide medium of thought. They have been useful in the propagation of enlightened ideas upon liberty, justice, equality, human rights, fraternity and mutual helpfulness. They are hastening the overthrow of effete and tyrannical governments, in the interest especially of liberty of conscience and religious freedom. They are busy instilling lessons of Christian philanthropy and putting into motion the impulses of beneficence and charity. They are constantly giving to the world examples of heroism and lessons of sacrifice in the lives and biographies of such men as Carey, Judson, Martyn, Patteson, Zinzendorf, Livingston, Hannington, Keith-Falconer, Moffat, Mackay, and Paton. They are breaking the power of priestcraft and the tyranny of superstition, and giving impulse and scope to aspirations after better things while opening the door of hope to despairing hearts. They are releasing woman from her immemorial degradation in heathen lands by sending devoted

women to visit her in the seclusion of the zenana and the harem to teach and brighten her life amid her hitherto cheerless and depressing surroundings. They are building an altar of social worship in many a humble home, purifying and sweetening domestic life and enforcing the blessed moralities of the Christian family. They are rebuking vice and making its shamelessness less ostentatious and its practice less easy. They are giving a spiritual tone to religion and freeing it from hollow forms and degrading idolatries. They are establishing a simple worship, and giving a helpful, instructive and human touch to the ministrations of the Church, placing the Word of God in the hands of men in their own language—the language of the heart and home. They are bringing souls continually into the light, and liberty, and hope, and spiritual obedience of the Gospel of Christ.

FORCES AT WORK.

This work is conducted at the present hour under the auspices of over 200 Missionary Societies, with the Word of God ready for use in 300 languages. There are 7,000 missionaries (including ladies) on the foreign fields, with 30,000 native helpers. The converts already

number nearly a million, and there are at least 4,000,000 adherents under the influence of mission instruction. There are 40,000 pupils in higher educational institutions, and 400,000 children in village schools.

The Great East India Company, in the zenith of its power, after concentrating all its wisdom and business acumen on the subject of missions, pronounced the sending of missionaries to the heathen to be "the maddest, the most extravagant, the most expensive, the most unwarrantable project that was ever proposed by a lunatic enthusiast." The answer of the last year of mission progress to the condensed and opaque folly of this astounding deliverance was 60,000 native conversions, and the outgushing of thousands of springs of moral power and blessing, pouring out their healing, refreshing and life-giving waters to a thirsty world.

The moral pulse of the world is beating quicker and stronger under the reviving and tonic power of missions. It is a cause which is identified with one of God's great thoughts, and it will be heard of more and more as the world moves on toward its final goal.

Copies of this leaflet may be had on application to William Dulles, Jr., 53 Fifth avenue, New York.